



For  
*Remembrance*



BY

*Margaret Complin*





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"Now God is in the strife,  
And I must seek Him there,  
Where death outnumbers life,  
And fury smites the air."

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With old wounds that ached, shell-shocked or lame,  
To the Unknown Warrior's tomb they came,  
The men who still must pay the price  
In painful daily sacrifice.  
Fill your glass today  
To the living's fame.  
Hush! Speak  
Low,  
Low,  
Low,  
Softly tread,  
He happy sleeps the unknown dead.

## *For Remembrance*

We keep Remembrance Day once more  
For those who died in the Great War.

No futile tears remembrance brings  
But blood-red wreaths for offerings  
To those who died, yet rise from sleep  
When their sons come, a faith to keep.  
Though tyrants crush the world again.  
They know they did not die in vain:  
They feel the sons they never knew  
Hate the same foe they hated too.  
They stand beside the men who fight  
Against those Vandals' brutal might;  
They lie on battlefields again  
And comfort men who die in pain;  
They talk with sailor lads who go  
To sink the U-Boats of that foe;  
Or fly with keen-eyed boys who rise  
To chase Hun planes from Egypt's skies.

We keep Remembrance Day once more  
For those who died in the Great War.

## *Leading Seaman X*

He garnered grain his hands had sown  
In rolling prairie soil.  
The heavy wheat stooked close in rows  
Reward for all his toil.

He was content! Though now and then  
He longed to hear once more  
The white waves racing with the tides  
On Nova Scotia's shore.

Sometimes in broken sleep he stood  
The harbour watch again,  
Or heard salt sea-winds hoarse with fog,  
Music of grieving rain . . .

Then came the War . . . He joined the Fleet.  
(They till his farm who may.)  
Forsaken fields, furrows weed-sown,  
Mean naught to him today.

He is content! He serves the King.  
He stands watch once more,  
And soundly sleeps to lullaby  
Of rough seas' restless roar.



## *The Soldier*



What thought his farm is warn't with  
spring?

He does not guide the plough.  
Instead he drives an armoured tank  
for Death, the Reaper, now.

On leave he longs for Canada  
in London's inky dark,  
and hears no melody of birds  
in any flower-filled park.

War fades... He hears the meadow-larks  
whistling across a plain  
where buffalo-willows' pungent scent  
drifts through the air again.

Small things a man remembers  
with sudden stab of pain.



## *For An Observer*

(A.C.R.)

I study your last photo for a trace  
Of any change these fateful months have made:  
Your eyes look up to mine still unafraid,  
Beneath the Air Force cap how dear your face!  
Yet war may score stern lines across your brow  
When hour by hour you fight from dusk till dawn  
To save the land you love from devils' spawn  
Of Super-Fiends warring against us now.

I see young pilots challenging the skies,  
From near-by airport comes the bombers' drone.  
I seem to hear your voice, look in your eyes...  
Then the dream fades, and I am here alone.

Your presence only could assuage this lack  
My dear—And yet I could not wish you back.

## *A Tribute to Greece*

Long since "the grandeur that was Rome"  
has died of inward rot and fears.

"The glory that was Greece" still lives  
watered by Grecian tears.

Are not these people brave beyond  
belief while Vandals desecrate  
their sacred soil, and crucify  
its sons in devilry and hate?

Still stands the Niké and the Parthenon!  
(Athene's temples raised by grateful Greece  
after the Persian hordes had sued for peace.)  
And the unconquered Dead at Marathon  
know that the soul of martyred Greece lives on.

## *Listening In*

We all  
hear radio  
plus ourselves and colour  
with <sup>our</sup> imagination each  
programme.

## *A Christmas Prayer*

Grant us, O Lord, the strength to pray  
for gifts that will not pass away:  
courage to face the common task,  
for hope and faith, dear Lord, we ask.  
Comfort all those who lie awake  
anxious for absent soldiers' sake.  
Grant that a world of strife and pain  
may turn to Bethlehem again  
to hear the song the angels sing—  
Remembering — Remembering.



## *Per Ardua Ad Astra*

Beneath these breathless alien skies  
a young Canadian airman lies.  
His flight is finished... Hark! for him  
the guns' staccato requiem.  
To save a friend he paid the price  
and gave his life, a sacrifice  
where Nazi war-winged vultures soar,  
and Britain's Fleet guards Egypt's shore.

*Through labour to the stars he came*  
unfaltering. In War's grim game  
he did not flinch. A fearless youth  
who fell for friendship, freedom, truth.  
What were his failing memories?  
The Rideau seen through maple trees?  
Alberta fields of ripened grain?  
Or fragrant mayflowers in the rain?

(At dawn, with silence everywhere,  
a father dreamed... wings beat the air;  
low flew a circling silver plane:  
he heard his son's farewell again.)

Grey pyramids assail the skies  
from sifting sands where Icarus lies  
with baffled wings... His flight is done...  
*Through labour to the stars he won.*

## *Radio*

This wonder knows no walls . . . I turn a dial  
and listen to a lilting roundelay,  
or poems underlaid with sorrow, while  
an organ throbs and muted violins play.  
I seek the short wave— Shall I hear again  
guns thunder grimly on the Dover shore?  
Tanks lumbering along an English lane?  
Or shuttling planes across a Scottish moor?

Unshackled Spirit! Scorning bounds of space,  
within whose eager hands all sound is furled,  
swifter than tempest, free as thought, you race  
on speeding sandals round a listening world.  
Man-doomed in sky and sea and land to strife  
while wingéd words spread chaos in Man's life.

**1942**

The world  
today is bound  
like Prometheus with  
the eagles of Zeus tearing his  
vitals.



## *War Gardens*

No longer in a sunny trench  
the gladiolus grows,  
the Queen of Flowers must abdicate.  
to beets in long straight rows.  
Here, crowding out the fragrant stocks,  
are onions, cabbage, chives,  
and where calendulas once flamed  
the humble turnip thrives.  
Potatoes grow in lumpy hills  
where late a green lawn spread,  
plebian spinach runs to seed  
in the prize pansy bed.  
Gaillardias give up their place  
to sage and mint and thyme,  
while runner beans usurp the wires  
where sweet peas used to climb.



## *Training Planes at Night*

A sudden roar of engines rouses  
sleepers in the dreaming houses

as low the training airplanes fly,  
Like jewels against the prairie sky

their green and red and white lights mark  
a safe-planned course through prairie dark.

The student pilots, keen to learn,  
think of the wings they hope to earn.

They swoop and turn and spiral down  
above the swiftly blurring town:

till, soaring high in wide-winged flight,  
they disappear into the night.

## *Bethlehem*

War-worn soldiers patrol early and late  
guarding the Holy Land with anxious eyes,  
while airplanes trace hieroglyphs of hate  
above blue hills where flat-roofed Bethlehem lies.  
Day closes now to soft Judean night  
and sheep lie huddled safe in strawy fold,  
but angels are silent, no heavenly light  
shines, no Magi bring frankincense or gold.

O Bethlehem, are you remembering  
That far, first Christmas morn?  
You have forgotten angels singing  
"The Prince of Peace is born."



## *Their Torch Flares, Lit By Us*

"If ye break faith with us, the Dead,  
We shall not sleep," a Poet said.

France expiates in blood and tears  
Yielding to traitors' frenzied fears,

Iron-heeled, rapacious German tread  
Crushes the fields of poppies red;

And droning warplanes whirr and fly  
Above the graves where our men lie.

Yet under crosses "row on row"  
They sleep content, and sleeping know

The torch they flung is held on high  
And we keep faith with those who die.

And ours to keep that faith today  
With all who follow in their way.

## *Advice*

Dreamer  
cling to your vague  
broken dreams: even a  
shattered dream is better than no  
dream at all.

## *Buy British*

China, and lace, and soft kid gloves  
in styles that every woman loves;  
soldiers, and planes, and naval toys  
made to delight Canadian boys;  
warm blue-grey sweaters carefully knit—  
we all know airmen they would fit—  
fashioned by those who've conquered fear  
of growling terror of the air.  
Through "blood and tears and toil and sweat"  
their factory wheels are turning yet:  
Biscuits and jams and marmalade  
still come to us, all British made.  
The Navy convoys Britain's best  
to war-free nations of the west,  
guarding through bombs, U-Boats, and strife  
the commerce that is Britain's life,  
and when we buy what they have sent  
we join them in a sacrament.



## *A Desereted Homestead*

(SASKATCHEWAN)

No longer the familiar treading of feet--  
In this forsaken farm nothing stirs  
save gophers scampering for their holes.  
Inch by inch encroaching Russian thistle  
covers the trail from shack to stable  
where his horses' nose-bags hang  
rotting on the wall.  
Petalled pall of prairie roses shrouds  
the skeleton of a plough,  
gold splash of mustard glints  
in fallow fields,  
but nothing remains of flowers he coaxed  
to grow but pods heavy with seed.  
I peer through windows curtained with  
cobwebs and grey dust:  
the sun-blistered door sags on rusted hinges  
and creaks protestingly when opened ...

I, who have shared his laughter and his toil,  
loitering with him to watch  
the wild geese winging,  
or new-born foal  
nuzzling the anxious mare,  
am old, too old to join the Tanks with him.  
I can but treasure brief lines from "Somewhere"  
in England's war-marred countryside.

Is his the long loneliness of the prairie-born  
for the bleak brown plains?  
Will he tread the well-worn trail again,  
or watch the wild geese winging?

## *Halifax*



The old  
Citadel stands  
sentinel, guarding with  
unseen guns an unbesieged  
town where

Sailors  
wait on spray-wet  
docks for convoys: their thoughts  
with prairie homes far-off from seas  
and war.

## *Armistice Day*

I stand beneath a poppy-wreathed  
Cenotaph.  
Sunlight falls through bare boughs on  
the Soldier.  
I think on those whom we honour today:  
those who gave themselves that peace might  
not perish from the earth.  
(Slowly the penumbra of a crooked Nazi  
cross creeps over the brooding  
Figure. A wreath of blood-red poppies  
turns to a crown of thorns.)  
Was theirs but a futile faith?  
Are freedom, truth, justice—  
all for which they died—  
but idols, war-wrecked?

The Armistice Day service is drowned  
in frenzied bark of anti-aircraft guns.  
The words of the hymns, the music of the  
band, are punctuated by cacophony of  
sirens, and of bombs.  
I cannot find God.

.... Yet in a beleaguered Isle  
men, in maze of grief and man-made  
agonies, find Him through tears,  
Or laughter like a prayer.

## *In Fields of Dream*

"MOTHER!" I hear you call again  
above the lashing autumn rain  
beating upon the window-pane.

O hold me close! My heart is wrung  
for you, so boyish and so young,  
whose song of life is all unsung.

(Too soon, too soon, the dream is done,  
only the rain's diapason.)

Return to me in dreams each night  
that I can keep a flame alight  
and my soul's armour burnished bright.

If where dreams meet we two can range  
you'll never grow far-off nor strange,  
and dreaded hours will not seem long  
with dreams of you to make me strong.

Thus night will fortify my heart  
for days in which you have no part.



## *The Mother of an American Airman*

As she knits socks of Air Force blue,  
the wool through her swift fingers flies,  
and she dreams evanescent dreams  
that lone reality decries.

(*Proudly she saw him go, and yet  
Her eyes with sudden tears are wet.*)

He serves a country not his own  
and with the R.C.A.F. flies.

His letters tell of safe return  
from bombing raids through hostile skies.  
(*With news of him by airmail flown  
His hand has almost held her own.*)

She takes small treasures from her desk:  
a Boy Scout's badge, a Pilot's wings,  
the Christmas gifts he sent to her—  
they comfort her, these little things.

(*Mary once treasured gifts to Her  
of gold and frankincense and myrrh.*)

His old dog feels her grief, and whines  
crouched at her feet upon the floor...  
Gazing courageously at death  
her son flies over France once more.

(*"God guide and guard my boy always  
till victory brings peace" she prays.*)

## *A Prayer for the New Year*

LORD, I grow old—Yet would not rest apart;  
Make me Thine acolyte  
whose duty  
is to tend twin lamps of Truth  
and Beauty  
in a dim shrine within Man's troubled heart.

